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Twentieth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. The present report is my twentieth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the process of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report on the subject was issued on 24 April 2014 (S/2014/296). I note herein the continued lack of progress on key provisions of the resolution and highlight increasing concerns about pressure on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. While recognizing the efforts of the Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, and the Government, I highlight the need to elect the new President and underline the continued impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on Lebanon and the challenges to efforts to uphold the Lebanese policy of disassociation from the Syrian crisis.

2. In response to the political situation in Lebanon, the Security Council, in a presidential statement adopted on 29 May 2014 (S/PRST/2014/10), expressed disappointment and concern that the presidential elections had not been conducted within the time frame set out in the Constitution. The Council appealed to all Lebanese parties to preserve national unity in the face of attempts to undermine the country's stability, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration, and stressed the importance for all Lebanese parties to respect the Lebanese policy of disassociation. On 26 September, the International Support Group for Lebanon looked to the leaders of Lebanon to show the sense of urgency and flexibility needed to open the way for the presidential elections to be held without further delay.

3. Following a time of relative calm after the formation of the Government, Lebanon witnessed further challenges to its security situation during the reporting period, including five terrorist attacks involving improvised explosive devices and car bombs that left at least three people dead and tens injured. There were also at least 15 attacks by the Syrian air force on the area around the Lebanese town of Aarsal, close to the Syrian-Lebanese border. Cross-border shooting, shelling and rocket attacks from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon regularly took place, causing death and injury. Until his term as President of Lebanon ended on 25 May, Michel Sleiman maintained his calls for all Lebanese parties to disassociate

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themselves from the war in the Syrian Arab Republic and to respect their commitment to the principles of the Baabda Declaration.

4. The impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on the security and stability of Lebanon was unmistakeable during the reporting period. In its press statement of 4 August (SC/11507), the Security Council condemned an attack begun on 2 August by violent extremist groups on the Lebanese armed forces and internal security forces in the area of Aarsal, which had caused some 100 fatalities and numerous injuries by 7 August when it ended. The Lebanese army and security forces suffered additional casualties in other attacks against them, but remained robust and resilient in tackling multiple security challenges. There were some positive developments linked to the implementation of security plans in Tripoli and the Bekaa.

5. On 17 June, the Government of Italy hosted a ministerial conference on international support for the Lebanese armed forces under my auspices in the context of the International Support Group. The participants acknowledged the extraordinary pressure on the armed forces and the need to provide additional international support, in line with the army's capabilities development plan.

6. Lebanon, in territory the smallest of the countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic, continues to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, including 1.2 million registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. While its support for the refugees remains unabated, Lebanon is facing significant humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges as a result of the Syrian crisis, with recent security developments further increasing the pressure. The United Nations and the Government of Lebanon continue to work closely together to mobilize greater assistance to help Lebanon to respond to the crisis.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

7. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in my previous reports. Presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted freely and fairly in 2008 and 2009. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

8. During the reporting period, the Prime Minister continued to affirm the country's respect for all United Nations resolutions. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and its corresponding impact on Lebanon, however, continued to limit progress in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

9. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), remains pending. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias along the border continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, highlighting the need for the Government and the armed forces to step up their efforts to provide stability and to reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

10. My representatives and I remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon during the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I spoke to the President on 25 May to pay tribute to his leadership during his tenure and to laud his commitment to the unity and stability of Lebanon, including through the International Support Group and the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. I regret that no sessions of the National Dialogue have been convened since the most recent session on 5 May, given that I remain convinced that the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, in particular Hizbullah, can be best achieved through a Lebanese-led, cross-party political process. I encourage Lebanese leaders to continue their discussion of a national defence strategy and to achieve tangible progress. I also met the Prime Minister on 26 September and highlighted the importance of continued and united international support for the security and stability of Lebanon and the critical need for greater assistance to help the country to meet the exceptional challenges that it faces.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

11. Resolution 1559 (2004) aims at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon committed themselves. This objective has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

12. I am concerned by the failure to elect the new President. The mandate of Michel Sleiman as President ended on 25 May, leaving the position of Head of State vacant for more than four months and increasing the country's vulnerability in the face of mounting security, economic and humanitarian challenges. I commend the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Government to ensure the continuity of State institutions and call upon Lebanese politicians to elect the new President without further delay, in the interest of all communities in Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I continue to call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. Given the continuing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, however, progress has been even more difficult to achieve in this regard and no tangible steps were taken by either side in this regard during the reporting period.

14. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also remain critical to facilitating proper border control. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances, including continuing reports of cross-border fighting and movement of arms and people, further underlines the continued urgency of demarcating the border. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under Security Council resolution 1680 (2006), derived from resolution 1559 (2004).

15. On 2 August, in the most serious threat yet to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, a group of Syrian fighters, including extremist elements from the Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), attacked Lebanese army positions in Aarsal. The incident followed the arrest by the Lebanese army of a Syrian commander of one of the militant groups, Imad Jomaa, earlier in the day. Fighting continued until 7 August, when the armed forces and internal security forces regained control of the town after a ceasefire had been agreed upon. The precise number of fatalities remains unclear, although reports suggest some 100 deaths, including 19 soldiers, various militants and several civilians. During the withdrawal of the militants, 19 soldiers and 16 members of the internal security forces were taken hostage. Since their withdrawal, the militants have released 10 members of the internal security forces and four soldiers. I condemn the beheading of two of the hostages, both soldiers, allegedly by ISIL, and the execution of a third, a soldier, reportedly by the Nusra Front.

16. During the reporting period, at least 23 cross-border shelling incidents and rocket attacks causing injuries and material damage were reported in north-east Lebanon. On 17 June, Syrian refugees and Lebanese residents who had fled violence across the border were displaced from the Lebanese village of Tufail by shelling originating from the Syrian side of the border. During the same period, there were reports of 22 air raids by the Syrian air force on Lebanese territory, causing at least five deaths and more than 20 injuries. The Lebanese authorities have consistently highlighted the need to defend Lebanon from such attacks and on 25 July the armed forces responded by firing back at the Syrian aircraft that had violated Lebanese sovereignty.

17. The continued occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I continue to engage closely with both parties with a view to facilitating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area in implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

18. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area during the reporting period. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has yet responded with regard to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

19. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israeli armed forces continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested against the violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. The Israeli authorities, in turn, claim that the overflights are carried out for security reasons.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

20. The Government of Lebanon has reiterated to the United Nations its intention to extend State authority over all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif

Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The armed forces and internal security forces have played a crucial role in implementing this commitment under difficult circumstances. The ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all its territory continues to be challenged, however. I welcome the Government's commitment to building the capabilities of the army and security forces and the international assistance pledged to date, including $3 billion by Saudi Arabia in March 2014 in cooperation with France, and reiterate the need for continued international support to be provided to the authorities and the armed forces.

21. During the reporting period, several incidents challenged national security, most of which were linked directly or indirectly to the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Concern remains at the involvement of Lebanese fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic, including those of Hizbullah. On 5 May, at the most recent session of the National Dialogue, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to the Baabda Declaration and the Lebanese policy of disassociation. Hizbullah and the Lebanese Forces did not attend, however. Hizbullah continued to publicly acknowledge its sustained involvement in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic including, most recently, on 15 August during a speech by its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Hizbullah also held funerals for its fighters killed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

22. At least five terrorist incidents occurred in Lebanon during the reporting period. On 31 May, an improvised explosive device detonated in Aarsal, injuring at least two people. A suicide car bomb attack on a checkpoint mounted by the internal security forces on 20 June in Dahr el Baidar killed a police officer and injured at least 30 others. On 24 June, a suicide bombing in the Tayouneh area of southern Beirut killed an officer of the General Security Directorate and injured at least 20 civilians. On 25 June, a militant blew himself up and injured at least 10 people during a security raid on a hotel in the Ras Beirut area of the capital. On 6 August, at least 1 person was killed and 10 others wounded in a bombing in Tripoli, amid reports that the blast had targeted an army patrol. Such violent incidents reflect the widespread proliferation of weapons held by non-State actors and the significant threat that such weapons pose to national peace and security.

23. The armed forces and other security agencies faced direct attacks against their personnel during the reporting period, including the events of 2-7 August in Aarsal. On 24 April, five soldiers were wounded in an ambush outside Aarsal by armed militants. On 16 May, three members of the internal security forces were wounded in a grenade attack in Aarsal. Eight soldiers were wounded in Tripoli on 20 May when armed men shot at them and attacked them with grenades. An armed forces bus was shot at in Tripoli on 5 August and, on the following day, an improvised explosive device targeting an army checkpoint exploded, killing 1 civilian and injuring 11 others. Most recently, two soldiers were killed and at least three others wounded in a roadside bomb attack close to Aarsal on 19 September.

24. The security agencies responded robustly and resiliently to some of the security challenges facing the country. The implementation of security plans for the northern city of Tripoli and areas of the Bekaa led to the successful detention of several individuals wanted on various charges, including in connection with previous outbreaks of violence in Tripoli. The detention of others in relation to terrorism included the arrests of Sheikh Omar Bakri Fustoq on 25 May and Imad

Jomaa on 2 August. Furthermore, while the situation remains fragile, there have been no significant outbreaks of violence in Tripoli since my previous report.

25. Efforts to further increase the capabilities of the armed forces and their ability to tackle multiple challenges, including internal security, continued. In the press statement of 4 August, the Security Council expressed its support for the armed forces and internal security forces in their efforts to combat terrorism and in preventing attempts to undermine the security of Lebanon, in addition to highlighting the need to further build the capabilities of the security forces to counter terrorism and other security challenges. I welcome the commitments by several Member States to providing further support to the security forces, including for counter-terrorism and border protection efforts. I particularly welcome a further donation of $1 billion from Saudi Arabia, announced by the former Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, two days before his visit to Lebanon on 8 August after a prolonged absence.

26. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon remained generally stable, notwithstanding the incidents detailed in my most recent report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2014/438). In my next report on that subject, I will provide details on subsequent incidents, including the launching of rockets and Israeli retaliatory fire.

27. With regard to the border of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic, there continued to be reports of arms trafficking in both directions. Several Member States continued to express deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. Israeli officials stated that they would act to prevent advanced weapons systems from being transferred to Hizbullah from the Syrian Arab Republic. Senior representatives of Hizbullah, for their part, maintained their position that they had no intention of acquiring chemical weapons. The Lebanese authorities indicated that the land border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic remained difficult to control, but that the Lebanese armed forces had been deployed and were seeking to tighten control along the border to the best of their ability. While the United Nations has no independent means of verifying reports of cross-border arms smuggling, I have repeatedly expressed my concerns about the risks to both countries.

28. To tackle continuing cross-border incidents and in the context of reports of arms smuggling, there remains an urgent need to improve the management and control of the land borders of Lebanon. This is also necessary to prevent armed groups and militias in Lebanon from expanding their weapons arsenal, given that such expansion constitutes a threat to national and regional peace. Donor coordination with the authorities on integrated border management is under way. I reiterate my calls upon all Member States to renew efforts to meet their obligations under Security Council resolutions to take the measures necessary to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

29. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This remains a key provision of the resolution that has not yet been implemented. It reflects and reaffirms a

decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Agreement, which led at the time to Lebanese militias, with the exception of Hizbullah, giving up their weapons. Given the current national context and the growing impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, it is critical that this agreement be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese and to strengthen the institutions of State.

30. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continue to operate outside the control of the Government, in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups poses a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, several Palestinian armed groups continue to operate in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

31. Since my previous report, there has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle this crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. Several Lebanese groups and individuals continue to speak up against the maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal, which they consider a destabilizing factor in the country and contradictory to democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued existence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons.

32. I have repeatedly expressed my deep concern to Lebanese leaders about the serious risks that armed groups pose to the stability of the country and the region. I have urged them to tackle this matter without further delay, given that it is their obligation under Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). In a democratic State, it is a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains its own militia. Nonetheless, Hizbullah has continued to acknowledge openly that it maintains and expands a substantial military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State. It further claims that its arms serve as a deterrent against potential aggression from Israel. Israeli officials continue to express concern at the alleged maintenance by Hizbullah of unauthorized weapons and the presence of armed personnel in civilian areas in the south of Lebanon.

33. The presence of armed extremist militants in Lebanon, as witnessed in the incident in Aarsal and highlighted by the arrests of individuals wanted on terrorism-related charges by the Lebanese security forces, is deeply worrying. The violence and terrorist acts during the reporting period cost many lives and caused great suffering and fear to many innocent Lebanese, affecting all communities nationwide. Reports of groups in Lebanese communities carrying arms to protect themselves for fear of attack by such groups as the Nusra Front and ISIL are also deeply worrying.

34. I have long supported the National Dialogue as the best way to deal with the issue of arms and achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. I am concerned that, with no Head of State, momentum on building consensus and a unified vision on the issue will be

lost in the coming period. Since the end of the mandate of Michel Sleiman, no further sessions of the National Dialogue have been scheduled.

35. During the reporting period, the security situation in the Palestine refugee camps remained generally stable, with the exception of a few violent incidents. From 12 to 14 May, intermittent clashes between factions in the Ein el-Hillweh camp left one person dead. On 19 May, a bomb exploded in an attempt to assassinate an official from the Fatah movement in the camp, injuring three people. On 30 June, armed clashes in the Shatila camp left 2 people dead and more than 10 injured. In a positive development, a joint Palestinian security force, comprising some 150 members of various groups, began its first deployment within the Ein el-Hillweh camp on 8 July.

36. Humanitarian conditions for Palestine refugees in Lebanon are increasingly dire, with the influx of an additional 44,000 refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic since the beginning of the crisis placing tremendous further pressure on the overall situation in the camps and gatherings, in addition to the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist them. UNRWA has taken measures to reduce tension between the Palestine refugees who have been residing in Lebanon and those arriving from the Syrian Arab Republic by, for example, including refugee children in regular classes in UNRWA schools. The United Nations has continued to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the living conditions of the refugees. This should be done without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region, and bearing in mind the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation.

37. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue and confirmed in subsequent sessions, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country. All but one of the bases are located along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Their presence continues to undermine Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority and makes delineation of the border more difficult. It poses a serious challenge to the effective control of the eastern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I have reiterated my calls upon the Lebanese authorities for the implementation of earlier decisions of the National Dialogue, specifically those relating to the dismantling of the above-mentioned military bases, and upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with those efforts in good faith.

III. Observations

38. I continue to be disappointed at the lack of further tangible progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). Lebanon continues to face serious challenges to its stability and security, both internally and along its borders with the Syrian Arab Republic, including from terrorism and extremist groups, arms smuggling and further influxes of refugees. I am also concerned that continued stagnation in the implementation of the resolution could lead to the erosion of provisions already implemented and contribute to a further

deterioration in the stability of Lebanon. I reiterate my firm conviction that it is in the best interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region.

39. I have repeatedly condemned the continued violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon, including the many incidents in which civilians have been killed or injured on the Lebanese side of the border because of the actions of warring parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The reporting period witnessed the most serious threat yet to Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, in the context of the attack on the armed forces and security forces in Aarsal from 2 to 7 August by armed extremist groups involved in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. Reports of continued activity by the Nusra Front and ISIL in the mountainous area around Aarsal are deeply worrying. I condemn the continuation of cross-border shelling and rocket attacks by various groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and the air raids by the Syrian air force on Lebanese territory, which are a further violation of Lebanese sovereignty. I continue to call upon all parties, including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

40. Since 24 April, there have been five terrorist attacks in Lebanon, including those carried out by groups claiming that they are acting in response to the participation of Hizbullah in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. I remain deeply concerned by the failure of various elements to cease involvement in that fighting and in particular the acknowledged participation by Hizbullah of its role therein. The participation by Hizbullah and other Lebanese elements in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic and the actions in Lebanon of extremist armed groups, including ISIL and the Nusra Front, that are based in the Syrian Arab Republic have had a significant impact on security and stability in the country. Such developments highlight that there is a continued need to uphold the principles of the Baabda Declaration and the policy of disassociation and for Lebanese parties to step back from their involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic.

41. The fear of the presence in Lebanon of armed militants from the Syrian Arab Republic is increasing. The deplorable acts of brutality by such groups, including the beheading of two Lebanese soldiers by ISIL, the execution of a third, reportedly by the Nusra Front, and sectarian violence elsewhere in the region, have caused fear among Lebanese communities. Reports of the formation of armed groups to protect local communities are deeply worrying and would run counter to the spirit of resolution 1559 (2004). Further unity and moderation between the various communities in Lebanon will, I hope, contribute to the country's strength and resilience.

42. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the continued existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern, in particular because it creates an atmosphere of intimidation and represents a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the government monopoly on the legitimate use of force. I reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to

engage in any militant activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004).

43. I continue to urge the Government and armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). I also call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely political party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interest of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

44. I commend the efforts of the armed forces to robustly confront multiple security challenges throughout the country and to protect the stability and security of Lebanon. They have made progress in tackling terrorist threats, despite suffering losses, and deployed robustly in all conflict-affected areas. The implementation of security plans in Tripoli and the Bekaa has produced positive results, which need to be consolidated and built on, including in efforts to combat terrorism. I welcome the unified support across the political spectrum behind the Prime Minister and the Government for the army and security forces in the immediate aftermath of the crisis in Aarsal. I also encourage the continued support of the international community, including through the International Support Group for Lebanon, and note the provision of assistance and equipment for the armed forces. I also welcome the commitment of $1 billion by Saudi Arabia on 6 August to help to build counter-terrorism capacity in Lebanon, made in addition to its pledge of $3 billion in March 2014.

45. I am deeply concerned by the situation of Palestine refugees in the camps and the additional pressure being placed on the limited resources available in the light of the presence of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who have fled the violence there. I reiterate my call upon donors to support UNRWA and its vital work in providing services to Palestine refugees in Lebanon. I note the formation of a Palestinian joint security force in the Ein el-Hillweh camp. Strong cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and the Palestinian security forces in the camps has been crucial in ensuring that security incidents are brought under control swiftly.

46. I regret the absence of any progress on the delineation and demarcation of the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, which has a significant impact on border control. I remain of the view that integrated border management will, in the longer term, contribute significantly to better control of the borders of Lebanon and help to prevent the illegal transfer of weapons and fighters in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of events in the Syrian Arab Republic. I call upon donors to continue their support for border management.

47. The continued violations by Israel of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, most conspicuously the overflights of Lebanese territory by Israeli aircraft, are deplorable. I reiterate my call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. Recent incidents along the Blue Line, as detailed in my reports on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), underscore the importance of ensuring

that the situation there remains calm. I commend the Lebanese and Israeli armed forces for their efforts to reduce tensions and for the support and coordination of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in this regard.

48. I am disappointed at the failure to elect the new President within the time frame set out in the Constitution and concerned that the presidency has remained vacant for more than four months. I commend the leadership of Michel Sleiman in steering Lebanon through multiple challenges to national unity. Leaving the position of Head of State vacant increases the country's vulnerability to mounting security, economic and humanitarian challenges. While I commend the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Government to ensure the continuity of State institutions, I call upon Lebanese politicians to elect the new President without further delay, in the interest of all communities in Lebanon. Holding a free and fair presidential election, in the spirit of resolution 1559 (2004), is a key element in preserving democratic institutions.

49. The security of Lebanon must prevail, as must national peace, without intimidation by armed groups. The maintenance of weapons by armed groups, including Hizbullah, outside State control is in contradiction to the Taif Agreement and incompatible with the democratic process. I note the Cabinet's approval, on 19 August, of a decree to hold parliamentary elections.

50. With Lebanon hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, recent security developments, especially in the eastern border region, have put even greater pressure on the refugees, the host communities that receive them and the country more broadly, necessitating further support from the international community. I welcome the activation of the multi-donor trust fund with the help of the World Bank and strongly encourage Member States to fulfil their burden-sharing responsibilities by contributing generously through this and other mechanisms.

51. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of peace and security during a particularly difficult and challenging time for Lebanon and the region. I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government to its international obligations and call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I further call upon Member States to renew efforts to support Lebanon in ensuring respect for its obligations under those resolutions as the best way to advance the country's long-term prosperity and stability as a democratic State. I will continue my efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.